

2007 Brings New Daylight Saving Time

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It's that time of year again when we all have to adjust our clocks, and our body clocks, to observe Daylight Saving Time. However, this year, the "Spring Forward" ritual arrives three weeks earlier than in previous years.

The change is part of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, signed into law by President George W. Bush on August 8, 2005. The early arrival of Daylight Saving Time (DST) is only in the United States, as most of the countries of Western Europe will observe the time change on the standard last Sunday in March.

The main purpose of DST is to make better use of daylight. Studies show that DST saves energy (about 1 percent each day) because less electricity is used in the evening for lighting and appliances. With more people participating in outdoor activities during the months, DST also provides more daylight hours for recreation and travel.

Daylight Saving Time has been used in the United States and in many European countries since World War I. The beginning and ending of DST changed several times, and each state had the option not to participate.

On January 4, 1974, President Nixon signed into law the Emergency Daylight Saving Time Energy Conservation Act of 1973. Two days later, clocks were set ahead for a 15-month period through April 27, 1975. Under legislation enacted in 1986, DST in the United States began at 2 a.m. on the first Sunday of April and ended at 2 a.m. on the last Sunday in October.

With the new date for DST to begin, the Secretary of Energy will study the energy savings and report the impact of this change to Congress, which has retained the right to revert to the 1986 standard time change law if the new date proves unpopular or if energy savings are not significant.

The fact that everyone in the United States observes this change on the same day gives people an opportunity to remember some energy saving tips for their home. For years, a many people have changed the batteries in their smoke detectors on this date and again in the fall. This year we will "Fall Back" to our original time on the first Sunday in November – Nov. 4. Again, this is another good time to change the batteries in your smoke alarms.

These dates are also a good time to clean or change the filter in your furnace. Most heating systems need to have the filter changed several times a year, it's a good idea to be sure they are changed or cleaned after the heating season and after the cooling season, so the DST dates are ideal. Clean filters help save energy and contribute to the overall maintenance of the heating system.

If you own an automatic setback thermostat, that handy little appliance may even tell you when the filter needs to be changed. The filter may need to be changed every one or two months if you own pets or live in a dusty environment.

To learn more about Energy Conservation, call the Idaho Energy Hotline at 1-800-334-SAVE. The Energy Division is also available at www.energy.idaho.gov.